The name K'uei gradually became the general term for all malvaceous plants including hibiscus, hollyhock, and others.

Mallow as a vegetable is mentioned in most of the important classics. In *Chou Li*, K'uei was one of the seven vegetables pickled and offered for sacrifice. It is mentioned in the *Book of Odes:* "In the seventh month, K'uei is cooked." In later times, after the T'ang and Sung dynasties, it gradually became less and less used. At the time of Li Shih-chên, in the Ming dynasty, it

FIG. 28. Chin K'uei, *Malva sylvestris*. From *Illustrated Investigations on the Identity of Plant Names.*

FIG. 29. Tung K'uei, *Malva verticillata*. From *Illustrated Investigations on the Identity of Plant Names.*

was already noted as not much used and rarely cultivated. Wu Ch'i-chün, however, stated in 1848 that it was then still being used commonly in Kiangsi and Hunan provinces. At present, people in many parts of the country do not know this plant as a vegetable, but it is sometimes cultivated as an ornament for its light purplish flowers. It is, however, a common wild plant throughout the country. Its use as a vegetable is now limited to a few interior provinces such as Szechwan and Yunnan. Because it possesses an abundance of mucilage, it is called, when used as a pot herb, Hua Ts'ai, or Slippery Vegetable.

Hollyhock

Althaea rosea, popularly known as hollyhock, is now a common garden flower in all countries. There are many different colors and forms of the flowers, which are either single or double. The plant is generally considered to be of Chinese origin, but some Chinese authors suggest that the hollyhock was probably introduced into China in early times from some Western country. The

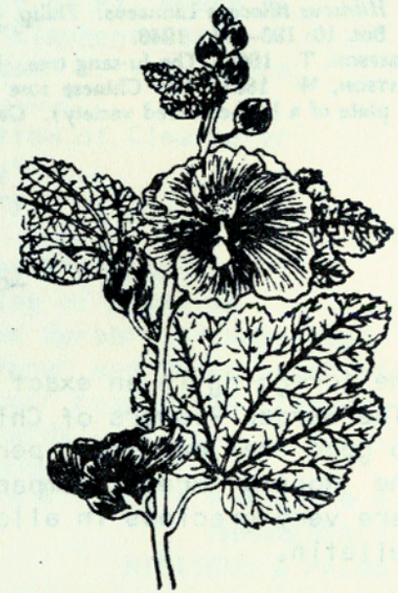

FIG. 30. Hollyhock. From *Illustrated Investigations on the Identity of Plant Names.*

plant is now known as Shu K'uei (Mallow from Szechwan) (Fig. 30). An older name formerly used is Jung K'uei (Mallow of the Tribes of the West), which seems to indicate a foreign origin. However, the plant is apparently indigenous and was perhaps first cultivated in Szechwan Province. It is recorded in the ancient dictionary *Êrh Ya* as "Chien." According to the commentary of Kuo P'o, this name is identified as the Shu K'uei of later times; and the further commentary of Hing Ping notes that the characters Shu and Jung are, in this case, synonymous, for Szechwan Province was in very ancient times considered outside the boundary of China.